PIMA PROSPERS

Pima County Major Streets and Scenic Routes Plan Amendment
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

HEARING DATES	Wednesday March 25, 2015 and Wednesday April 8, 2015
CASE	Co14-14-02 Major Streets and Scenic Routes Plan Amendment
SUBREGIONS	All
DISTRICTS	All
REQUEST	Proposal by Pima County to amend the Major Streets and Scenic Routes Plan

STAFF REPORT

Recommendation

Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the proposed amendment to the Major Streets and Scenic Routes Plan (MSSRP). Staff further recommends that a motion to approve include the following seven part recommendations:

1. **APPROVAL** to **ADD** eleven new major streets.
2. **APPROVAL** to **REALIGN** two existing major streets.
3. **APPROVAL** to **DELETE** 53 existing major streets.
4. **APPROVAL** to **INCREASE** the future right-of-way designation for four major streets.
5. **APPROVAL** to **REDUCE** the future right-of-way designation for 105 major streets.
6. **APPROVAL** to **CHANGE** twenty scenic and major streets to scenic, non-major streets.
7. **APPROVAL** to **CLASSIFY** all major streets as either "high volume", "medium volume" or "low volume" arterial streets or as collector streets with associated future right-of-way widths.

This amendment includes several minor changes to the MSSRP and updates the major streets and scenic routes map. These changes also conform to the land use changes proposed in the Pima Prospers Comprehensive Plan as well as plans from adjacent jurisdictions. This amendment is not intended to change Scenic Route designations; however, minor edits were made to delete routes that were never built as planned. Several streets will lose their "major street" designation, but retain their "scenic" designation.

The MSSRP is an important planning tool because it allows the county to accomplish three things. First, it establishes future right-of-way widths for major roadways and enables the county to reserve roadway right-of-way as development occurs. It is the key regulatory means of

connecting land use to transportation and is critical to planning for growth. Reserving right-of-way as development occurs reduces the cost and difficulty of obtaining right-of-way in the future when it is needed for roadway expansion. Second, the MSSRP establishes setbacks prior to the construction of the full roadway cross section. This provides property owners advanced notice of the future of the roadway. It also prevents anything from being built in the future right-of-way. Third, the MSSRP designates scenic routes which preserver scenic view by limiting building heights and colors.

Minor amendments to the MSSRP have occurred over the years to add or delete specific major streets to reflect growth and development, but no system-wide change has occurred in many years. The plan is currently outdated and in some areas it does not accurately reflect current and planned development, environmental constraints, traffic patterns, and capacity needs. As part of the Pima Prospers Comprehensive Plan update, staff reviewed the entire major streets system and recommends changes as described in this report.

History of the MSSRP

The Pima County Board of Supervisors first adopted the "Plan of Major Streets and Routes" in 1952 which classified roads as scenic routes and major streets. The terms "major streets" and "scenic routes" were not specifically defined, but it was generally understood that major streets were those which either carried the most traffic and/or provided primary access to developing unincorporated areas as opposed to local streets which serve subdivisions and neighborhoods. Many major streets were located along section lines to create a 1-mile grid system. Scenic routes were generally understood to be located in picturesque areas that provided scenic views. Many scenic routes were also designated as major streets but a few were designated as scenic only and not considered major streets.

Amendments and refinements to the MSSRP in the early 1960's included classifications and widths for primary major streets (200 feet), secondary major streets (120-150 feet) and collector major streets (90-100 feet). The plan also included required setback distances from the centerlines of primary major streets (130 feet), secondary major streets (105 feet), and collector major streets (90 feet). Throughout the 1970's, there were approximately eighteen separate changes to the MSSRP by adding and deleting certain roads. In 1979, the MSSRP changed the setback calculations by requiring buildings to be setback 30 feet in addition to half the future right-of-way as shown on the plan. This reflected similar changes to the zoning code.

In the 1995 version of the MSSRP, many of the provisions and details of the earlier versions were left off the map. The resulting MSSRP only showed major streets, scenic routes, and right-of-way widths for some but not all of the major streets. Several amendments have occurred since then to add, remove, or modify route alignments.

How the MSSRP Works

The MSSRP map designates specific roads as "major streets" and/or "scenic routes". For major streets, a specific planned right-of-way width (often 150 feet) is typically associated with many (but not all) of the major streets. This is the planned future right-of-way width and is typically wider than the current actual right-of-way, but in some cases it is the same - or in rare circumstances less than - the current right-of-way width. When a proposed rezoning or development plan along a major street or scenic route is submitted for county review, staff requires that the owner/developer dedicate whatever extra right-of-way may be needed to achieve the future major street right-of-way width. For example, if there is 100 feet of actual roadway right-of-way adjacent to a planned development but the planned future right-of-way is 150 feet, the developer/owner will typically be requested to dedicate 25 feet of property, half the

total needed (on one side of the street) to achieve the 150 foot requirement.

Besides the dedicated right-of-way, setback requirements apply all development as well. The zoning code requires that all buildings or structures have setbacks equal to "half the future right-of-way" of the major street plus an additional 30 feet. For a 150 foot wide major route, this typically equates to 75'+30' = 105 feet. But the actual required setback varies depending on the location of the street within the right-of-way, the location of utilities, and other conditions. The MSSRP simply designates the planned future right-of-way for major streets.

There is sometimes misunderstanding about how the MSSRP works. The right-of-way designations do not automatically change actual right-of-way or transfer property ownership in any way. The MSSRP only applies to new development which may be asked to dedicate right-of-way if not enough exists at the time of development. If no development occurs, the MSSRP does not apply. If and when roadways are widened, the county at that time contacts adjacent property owners who could be impacted and negotiates right-of-way dedications if needed.

Scenic Routes

Many roads in Pima County are designated as "Scenic Routes" on the MSSRP. The Zoning Code (Section 18.77.040F2a) defines the criteria for designating a scenic route "based on exceptional scenic quality that helps define the community's character"... with "scenic resources (that) may be unique and (contain) significant views of mountains, vegetation, architecture, site design or geologic formations." The Code generally limits building heights to 24 feet and limits building and wall surfaces to certain colors within 200 feet of scenic routes, with some exceptions. For scenic, major streets, the zoning code requires that all buildings or structures have setbacks equal to "half the future right-of-way" plus an additional 30 feet. For scenic, non-major streets, the applicable zoning setback applies.

Development of the Proposed Changes

As part of the Pima Prospers effort, staff assembled a team from the Transportation and Development Services Departments along with consultants from the Planning Center and Psomas Engineering to evaluate and recommend changes to the MSSRP. The primary goal was to ensure that the recommended changes support the land use changes in the Comprehensive Plan. It was also important to update the plan to reflect updated plans in the other jurisdictions. Transportation staff also wanted to update the plan and incorporate much needed corrections that had been identified years ago but never implemented. Transportation staff analyzed existing and projected traffic volumes on the major street network for each of the sub-regional planning areas. Staff looked at planned future growth areas as identified in the proposed comprehensive plan update.

As a result of this analysis, it was determined that only a few new or modified major streets were needed to accommodate projected growth and development over the next ten years. This doesn't mean that new roadway widening, resurfacing, and other improvements aren't needed - roadway maintenance needs are critically needed in particular. But in terms of planning for future growth and development, the planned major route system and designated future right-of-way widths are generally adequate. What became apparent, however, is that in many cases there were more streets designated as "major" than functioned in this capacity and many future right-of-way widths were wider than what is anticipated to be needed. Therefore, the MSSRP team developed a set of recommendations to adjust the MSSRP network and planned right-of-way widths. These proposed changes are discussed in more detail below.

PROPOSED CHANGES

1. **11 New Major Streets** – Eleven new major streets are proposed. These include mostly existing major arterial streets that carry moderate amounts of traffic but for whatever reason were never designated as major streets. In some cases, they are two-lane roads that may have experienced growth and increases in traffic since the MSSRP was first adopted. Many of these streets already have adequate or even excess right-of-way to accommodate future expansion if needed, but others would require some additional right-of-way. Examples include portions of Alvernon Way, Linda Vista Boulevard, Overton Road, and Shannon Road. Only two proposed new major streets – portions of Andrada Road and Twin Peaks Road – are completely new roadways that do not exist today. These are proposed to align with the Town of Marana's (Twin Peaks Road) and the Town of Sahuarita's (Andrada Road) long range plans.

2. **2 Realigned Major Streets** – Two major streets are proposed to be realigned. Sunset Road is currently under design and will be constructed south of the present alignment shown on the MSSRP. The other is the realignment of Wilmot Road to connect with the Kolb Road interchange at I-10 which is part of the State Department of Transpiration's long range plan to rebuild the Kolb Road interchange.

3. **53 Deleted Major Streets** – Fifty-three major streets are proposed to be undesignated as major streets. These include many unbuilt roadways that are no longer anticipated to be needed or that would not realistically ever be built due to significant environmental constraints and/or existing houses and development. In other cases, these include streets that are not anticipated to be widened beyond the two lanes they are today. Examples include Soldier Trail/Freeman Road over the Tanque Verde Wash, roadways through previously planned areas of Rocking K north of Old Spanish Trail, and the extension of Campbell Avenue north and south of the Town of Sahuarita. Eight of these fifty-three proposed deleted major streets are also designated as Scenic Routes, such as unbuilt portions of El Moraga Drive and Camino de Oeste in the Tucson Mountains, but since these will likely never be needed or built due to significant environmental constraints and existing dwellings, they are proposed to be deleted as well. The elimination of these streets from the MSSRP will not change the standard setback requirements as prescribed in the zoning code, but it may reduce the amount of setback to a distance that is more appropriate given anticipated growth than currently required by the MSSRP.

4. **4 Increased Right-of-way Streets** – Four existing major streets are proposed to have increased future rights-of-way to provide for potential future widening and/or improvements if they are ever needed. Three of these major streets are currently designated for 120 feet of future right-of-way (Country Club Road, Palo Verde Road and Old Spanish Trail) and staff recommends that they be increased to 150 feet to accommodate future potential growth, and/or to match the designated future rights-of-way of adjacent street segments. The fourth is Picture Rocks Road from Sandario Road to Orange Grove Road which has 60 feet of current right-of-way and is proposed to have 90 feet of future right-of-way to accommodate potential future improvements if ever needed. Again, this new designation would only apply to new structures and development and would not affect existing houses.

5. **<u>105 Decreased Right-of-way Streets</u>** – Over one hundred streets are proposed to have reduced future rights-of-way from what is currently shown on the MSSRP. This is the greatest number of proposed changes and for some observers, it is perhaps a concern that reducing future setback requirements could create problems if those roadways are ever needed to be widened. There are compelling reasons, however, to consider these reductions. Many of these streets were originally designated with 150 feet of future right-of-way and as those areas have developed, this amount of right-of-way has been dedicated to the county. In these circumstances, there is sufficient right-of-way now to accommodate any potential roadway widening.

   But as is evident throughout the county roadway system, many of these roads have remained only two-lanes wide yet have excessively wide roadsides, often graded and without landscaping, that collect trash or become unofficial used car lots and other untended uses. After careful consideration and evaluation, Transportation staff has analyzed these streets and determined that they do not require as much future right-of-way as currently designated to accommodate future growth. In some cases, future improvements (such as a center turn lane) may be warranted, but these changes can be accommodated within the proposed 90 feet or in some cases 80 feet of future right-of-way.

   The benefit to reducing the future right-of-way for these streets is that for undeveloped parcels, it will provide additional developable property and allow future developers and owners to build closer to the adjacent major street. It will reduce the length of driveways, and it some cases it will allow commercial buildings to be closer to sidewalks, bus stops, and parking areas so that walking distances are minimized. It will also reduce the amount of undeveloped and unused roadsides that serve no purpose and have become an eyesore for the community.

6. **20 Scenic, Major Streets become Scenic Only** – Twenty major streets that are also designated as scenic routes are proposed to be re-designated as scenic only, which means that they would no longer be designated major streets. Many of these streets are dead-ends and do not connect to other major streets, or otherwise do not carry much traffic. Removing their major street designation may reduce the building setback distance somewhat for future development, but the scenic designation and the building height and color restrictions would remain. Examples include the western portion of Sweetwater Drive, Trails End Road, Tortolita Road, and Pistol Hill Road. All scenic routes, both major and minor, will now be shown on a separate map titled "Scenic Routes Plan".

7. **New Major Street Roadway Classifications** – In addition to adding, deleting and changing the future right-of-way designations for many major streets, Transportation staff is proposing to classify all major streets as high-volume arterials, medium-volume arterials, low-volume arterials or collector streets. These categories are somewhat similar in name to federal roadway classifications, but their purpose here is to simply associate a name with the proposed new future right-of-way width to make the MSSRP more readable. For example, collector streets will be designated with 80 feet of future right-of-way, low-volume arterials with 90 feet, medium-volume arterials with 150 feet and high-volume arterials with 200 feet. Each classification is a different color on the revised plan map so it is easy to read. In a few instances, the proposed future right-of-way width does not match the assigned right-of-way width, because the future width is wider than the standard (Tangerine Road is 300 feet and the Sonoran Corridor is 400

feet). In another instance, portions of Ina Road and Sunrise Drive are designated at 150 feet wide even though these roads are shown as high-volume arterials. This is because those roads have already been widened to four or six lanes and are not anticipated to require 200 feet of right-of-way.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

County staff mailed over 1,600 public notices and maps to property owners within 300 feet of all eighteen proposed new, realigned, or widened major streets. These include major property owners such as the State of Arizona, City of Tucson, the federal government, Tucson Airport Authority and Asarco and Phelps Dodge mining companies but the majority is private individuals. These are the properties that could be affected by proposed changes in setback requirements or more generally by the planning of a new or widened major route. Properties next to major streets that are proposed to be deleted or reduced were not specifically noticed because they are not negatively impacted. In fact, if major street setback requirements are eliminated or reduced, the adjacent properties could potentially acquire additional roadway frontage for development.

Transportation staff received 21 calls and 2 emails as of March 20 regarding the notices that were sent. After explaining the changes and how it would affect their property, only two opposed the changes. The first was from Mr. James DeGrood of the Regional Transportation Authority who opposed the reduction of First Avenue right-of-way from Orange Grove Road to Ina Road from 150 feet to 90 feet. First Avenue is an RTA project that recommends a four-lane arterial roadway. The Transportation Department responded to Mr. DeGrood that traffic volumes do not appear to support the need for a four lane expansion, but that 150 feet of right-of-way exists today which is enough to accommodate the proposed widening. Staff further explained that the proposed change would only affect setbacks for future development if it occurred along this segment and that no right-of-way would be lost. A second comment was received from Mr. Scott McDonald representing Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold, Inc. opposing any changes to Twin Buttes Road east of Mission Road. Staff supports this request.

Transportation staff also presented the proposed changes to the SAHBA Technical Committee on February 17, 2015. Several attendees inquired about the disposition of any potential excess right-of-way that could be created with the proposed changes to the MS&SRP. County staff met to discuss this issue and it was agreed that it would not be necessary to update any existing plats and development plans on record, that the proposed changes would only apply to new building and development from the adoption date forward, and that property owners would still be able to request the acquisition of excess county right-of-way through the normal abandonment process. The county would look at each situation on a case by case basis to determine whether or not and under what terms it would agree to abandon the property.

Respectively Submitted,

Arlan Colton, Planning Director
Development Services Department

Jonathan Crowe, Principal Planner
Transportation Department

Attachments:

Proposed Major Streets Plan
Proposed Scenic Routes Plan
List of Proposed Changes
Comment letter from RTA